

## Introduction

This ebooklet is the result of the notes I prepared for a lecture that I gave at a prominent London English Language School. The core theme of the booklet is the infusion of modern Anglo-American pop by African American music. The success of this popular music is first measured by numbers of sales, views, downloads and other indicators of global reach; such as the number of covers made by other artists. Later this measure is challenged with a network view of music production in underground Electronic Dance Music, Rap and to a lesser extent Punk. Most sections end with a question intended to spark group discussion.

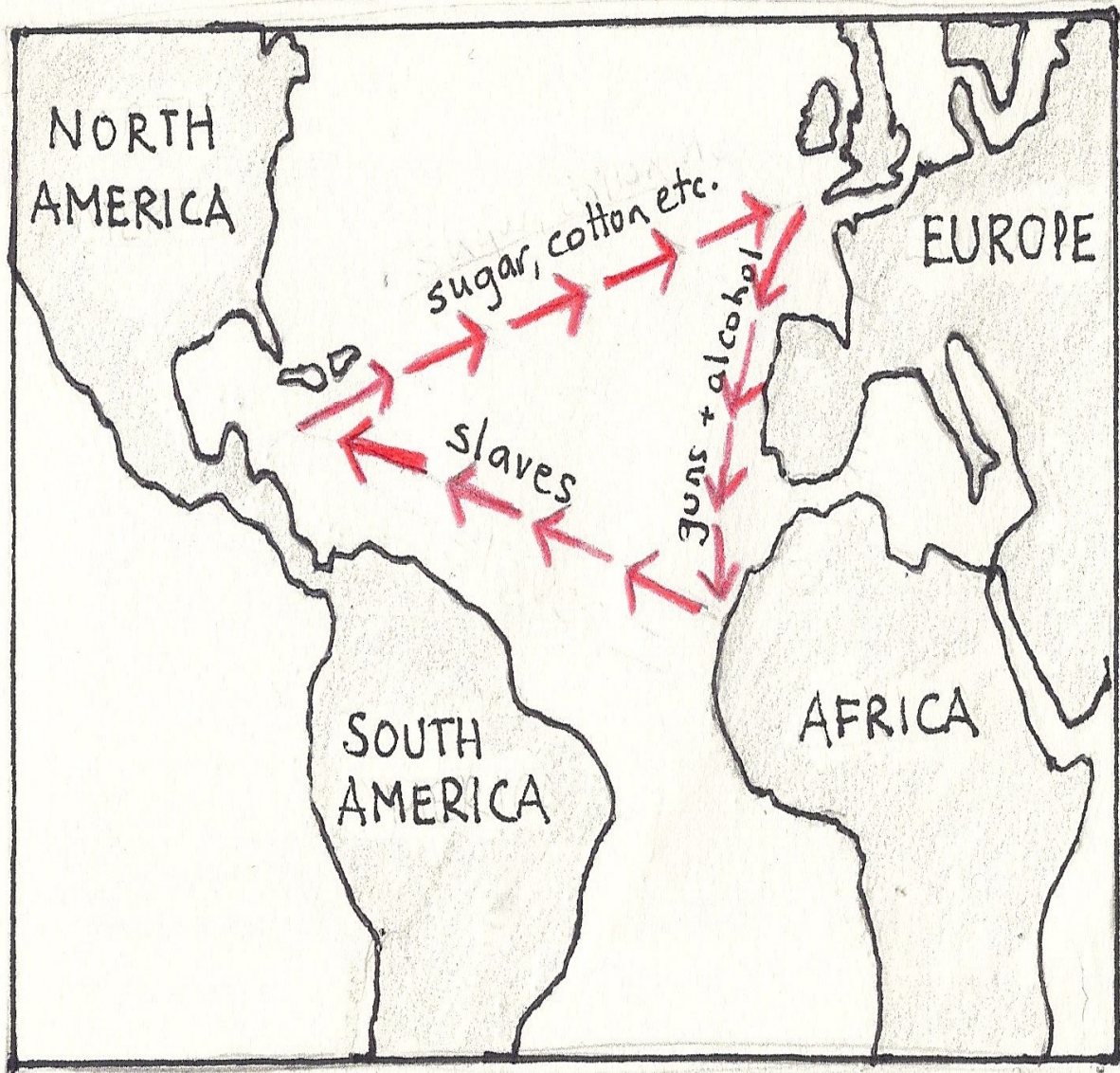
Out of a vast range of possible music I only discuss a dozen or so individual tunes. Inevitably this selection is personal; not necessarily in selecting only tunes that I *like*, but because I'm telling the story of my growing awareness of the global reach of music's influence. I also wanted to concentrate on music with something to communicate from a diverse range of viewpoints.

In the last few years I've been busy with a project called 'Agit Disco' which was a collection of playlists made by a wide range of selectors in response to the question 'What music had a political effect in your life?'. After growing as an online project, 23 of the CD length playlists were published as a book in 2012. The project then entered a dispersal phase with me playing several live sets on 7" records with guests who talked about and played their own selections.

'Global Music?' is a work in progress. Is there a global music that is significant beyond being light entertainment? What might it be capable of achieving? What might need to change for it to have a worthwhile effect? These are big questions I'd like to hear people thinking about. The value may be in the resulting conversations rather than the emergence of an expert set of definitive answers.

Stefan Szczelkun, London

# The Triangular Trade Route



CHAPTER 2

## The Roots Of Global Pop Music

The idea of Global Music examined here is assumed to derive from two main conditions.

Firstly; the legacy of the European empires and their cultural imperialism. In particular the shadow cast by the triangular trade in African slaves across the Atlantic ocean.

Secondly; the ever expanding globalisation of capital with its need to produce commodities for sale.

A basic strategy of social control in the British Empire was to suppress any indigenous cultures and religions under its administration and try to replace them with a idealised British form of culture and religion.

State governments, slave owners and Christian missionaries all attempted to erase the beliefs and cultural practices that the African slaves brought with them. The making and playing of musical instruments was banned; especially after the use of drums in the Stono Rebellion of 1739. Slaves continued to find ingenious ways to preserve and adapt their African culture away from the surveillance of whites within secretive 'invisible institutions'.

At the same time cultural repression was being used against the white proletarian population in Britain. Working class culture was systematically undermined by middle class mediators as vulgar and worthless. The cultural repression of workers in Britain was so thorough that by the 1950's a whole section of the working class had been silenced musically. This happened to my family. A story I unpacked in my book 'The [Conspiracy of Good Taste](#)'

The British and European regional musics were bowdlerised, undermined, regulated and commercialised for many generations by the ascendant literary class. The Afro-American and Caribbean musics that were imported to the UK from the 1950's entered this cultural vacuum and inspired a renewal of European working class music with an amplified sound that was infused with African forms. Electricity raised the decibel level of the music. As well as loudness all aspects of its promotion and recording were powered by increasingly sophisticated electronic technologies. This phenomena seems to have been especially powerful in Britain where it fuelled a surge of creativity, the products of which spread far and wide across the globe.

People across the globe then adopted the same technologies and adapted the musical forms to their own culture. The question is do we get a true picture of this globalisation by just looking at sales figures? Much African and other non-Western musics doesn't figure in the music industry's sales charts.

To emphasise the founding influence of African music I want to start by

listening to an Afro-American song that was a hit in the year I was born and has gone on to be the best selling Gospel song of all time with 8 Million sales - It is '[Move on Up a Little Higher](#)' by Mahalia Jackson. It was a song intended to promote upward mobility and could be claimed to have helped prepare the ground for the civil rights movement of the Fifties and Sixties.



Globalisation means that business corporations escape from their national boundaries and controls, and operate in a global marketplace. However I shall now focus on the music of the English speaking world where the British music industry still uses a national branding to market itself.

*"British artists accounted for one in seven albums sold around the world in 2014, with One Direction, Ed Sheeran, Coldplay, Pink Floyd and Sam Smith all making the top 10 list of the year's best-selling albums... Britain is now the second-largest provider of recorded music in the world, accounting for 13.7% of global sales."* BBC 5th November 2015

*"Our artists continue to dominate the global charts and shows, from the Royal Ballet and Rod Stewart to the London Symphony Orchestra and Status Quo, sell-out concerts across the globe. In fact, many people around the world*

*first learn about this country through one of our bands.”* John Whittingdale, Culture Secretary

**DATA: Music boosted the British economy by £4.1bn in 2014.** (figures from trade body UK Music)

Leading defender of the British Empire, the historian Dominic Sandford, was on BBC2 on 4th November 2015 saying that Britain was now a leading provider of global entertainment having made the transition from being the centre of heavy industry with the help of bands like the Beatles.



## Recording Technologies

The first recordings made by the early collectors of 'folk' music were handwritten music notation. They wrote down the songs they found onto five bar staves and simplified them into Sol-Fa harmonic piano music at the same time as bowdlerising the lyrics. This sanitised version of working class music was then fed back to the population in Britain through the new 'free education for all' in which every school hall aspired to have a piano and later a radio.

The really creepy thing about this was that it was not opposed by the new socialist political parties from the time of William Morris in the C19th right through the C20th to the 1980s.

In the 1950s electricity allowed both amplified guitar music and the first recordings of 'traditional' musics that then influenced bohemian performers like Bob Dylan. 'The Anthology of American Folk Music' edited by Harry Smith is a six record set first published by Folkways Records in 1952 that was very influential as was the field recording work of Alan Lomax and his father John.

Recording Technologies developed at a rapid pace in the next decades: acetate and then vinyl records, tape cassettes, digital music on CDs, MP3s and on to the current streaming off the internet.

Radio, analogue TV and then satellite digital TV helped to manufacture a passive audience ready to consume recorded music rather than make their own. The streets that had been full of whistling and singing gradually fell silent in the period after WW2 as the consumer lifestyle took hold.

Movies were produced globally soon after their invention at the very end of the C19th. The talkies arrived in Japan with the film 'Reimai' (Dawn) in 1926 to be followed in the USA with ['The Jazz Singer'](#) in 1927. China, Korea and India rapidly followed with their own sound movies. This is a strand I will only touch on in this essay but movies are a powerful force in the global dissemination of musics. Unfortunately, as with recorded music, the direction of the dissemination of films has largely been out from the USA and Europe.

In London in the early Sixties, a young mainly white British generation of youth without their own cultural traditions, but with money, empathised strongly

with African-American Rhythm & Blues records that were available as expensive imports. The Afro-American Blues filled the cultural vacuum and emotional hole left by the long history of cultural repression.

Soundtrack: ['Electricity'](#) by Captain Beefheart 1967.



#### CHAPTER 4

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## The Beatles And Me

I was a hippy student in 1967 when 'All You Need is Love' by the Beatles was broadcast globally on the worlds first live satellite TV link and watched by 400M people in 25 countries. That was on 25th June 1967. There was a build-up of idealistic hope that some kind of rock-n-roll/hippy world love-in would be triggered. The broadcast itself was an anticlimax. I couldn't really imagine the



effect in distant parts of the world. My own experience of watching it on a pub TV in Portsmouth was somewhat detached. It did not have the visceral impact that previous experiences of R&B and other rock bands had impressed on me. I'm talking about loud R&B in small suburban clubs. My most intimate experience of the Afro-American Blues was when I heard the legendary and aged harp player Sonny Boy Williamson in a small pub in Chertsey just over the River Thames from where I lived.

My first immersive experience of a trans-national audience was in San Sebastian in Northern Spain the following year. The summer after my first year at college provided the opportunity for my first trip abroad under my own steam. I drove my little khaki green minivan, with a couple of mates from school, down through France to San Sebastian. I vaguely remember sitting out in sand-dunes with youths from all over Europe and sleeping in the back of the minivan. The brandy and wine were really cheap but also pretty rough. People gathered around bonfires in the evening and I can remember being amazed that everyone seemed to know the words to '[Hey Jude](#)'. It shows how naive I was but, there you go, the memory stuck with me and the song doesn't seem to have faded in its appeal. It was a global commodity but I experienced it sung communally, not through the usual mass media channels at all. Maybe that is why it sticks in my mind as a vivid experience. It had been adopted that summer as the beach anthem that was most inclusive. For all those people, who often spoke little or no English, it was easy to join in with. Something about the slow pace, repetitions and length make it an ideal song for a singalong.

'Hey Jude' was written by Paul McCartney out of sympathy for John Lennon's son Julian when he was having a hard time during the break-up of John's first marriage.

DATA: '[Hey Jude](#)', 7:11 mins. 8 million singles were sold. There have been 57million YouTube views since 2008. The single is frequently included on critics' lists of the greatest songs of all time. Billboard named it the 10th biggest song of all time in 2013.

### **'Imagine'**

Four years after the reality check of 'All You Need is Love' Lennon came up with a much better song '[Imagine](#)' was John Lennon's manifesto, although he realised it still needed to be 'sugar coated'. The less sugar-coated version was 'Working Class Hero' which was the B side of the vinyl single when it was finally released in UK in 1975. When it was first released in the USA in 1971 the 'B' side was 'It's So Hard'. He was writing a political statement that would be acceptable to Paul McCartney at the same time as it was expressing his own

(re)definition of ‘communism’ with a small c.

The amount of covers that are made of a song is one of my criteria for judging its global stature. There are covers of ‘Imagine’ made by more than 160 artists! The copyright holder of the song, Yoko Ono, has never allowed any of these covers to leave out the anti-religious sentiment in the lyrics. On September 21, 2001, Neil Young performed this song on a benefit telethon for the victims of the infamous terrorist attacks on America. Almost 60 million people watched the special in the US.

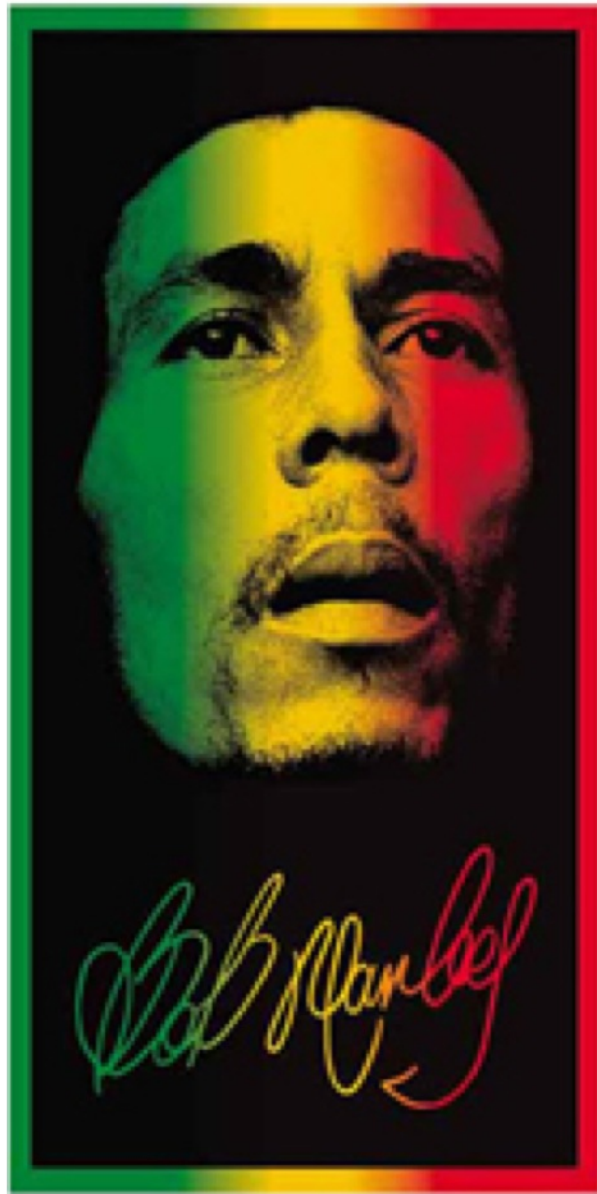
Lennon wrote ‘Imagine’ on a brown Steinway upright piano. In the year 2000 George Michael, who in 1985 had been the first rock star to play a pop concert in China, paid over \$2 million for the piano at an auction, and donated it to the Beatles Museum in Liverpool. The piano has since been to various world locations promoting peace.



From another point of view what was significant about The Beatles, was not any idealistic messages they composed but their achievement as ambassadors for a new modern Britain, packaged by their manager Brian Epstein as an image of a ‘sanitised, exaggerated Britishness’. In their distinctive mod suits they were saving ‘Great Britain’ from its industrial decline. (Dominic Sandford op cit)

[Q: What is your own experience of Imagine? Or what is your favourite Beatle track?](#)

Top photograph of Chris Jones and Stefan Szczelkun, by Peter Jones



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CHAPTER 5

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## Bob Marley And My Beachtowel

In '[Redemption Song](#)' from 1980 Bob Marley quotes the Pan-Africanist Marcus Garvey from a speech he made in 1937:

*“We are going to emancipate ourselves from mental slavery because whilst others might free the body, none but ourselves can free the mind.”*

*Mind is your only ruler - sovereign. The man who is not able to develop and use his mind is bound to be the slave of the other man who uses his mind."*

'Redemption Song' is considered by many to be Marley's most powerful song. It was included on the 1984 album 'Legend', a compilation album that has had sold 25 Million copies. The song first featured on the 'Uprising' album that was released in October 1980. It turned out to be Bob Marley's final studio album before his death. This album expresses Marley's strong Rastafarian beliefs and culminates in the classic 'Redemption Song'.

*"Never has an artist unknowingly written such a beautiful and living epitaph. The stark contrast from the decidedly electric and group-oriented album to this hauntingly beautiful solo acoustic composition is as dramatic as it is visionary."* Lindsay Planer, AllMusic review.

The historian Sandford ascribes much of Marley's success to the business acumen of the man who set up Island Records, Chris Blackwell. Blackwell had grown up in Jamaica with a love of its music. He was a white entrepreneur who imported Jamaican music; instead of the sugar from which his mothers' family had made their fortunes. After recording and selling Ska his first pop hit record was 'My Boy Lollipop' by Millie in 1964. Blackwell quickly recognised Bob Marley's charisma and talent, and invested heavily in him and his band 'The Wailers'. Sandford claimed this could have only happened in London because of its dense web of cultural and economic connections. He could have said, but didn't, that this dense web was founded on the processes of accumulating capital from slavery, the sugar trade and the British Empire in general.

I was on holiday in a medieval village on the Island of Rhodes in Greece about 10 years ago when I was delighted to find a wonderful beach towel with an iconic Bob Marley image emblazoned on it. I was really pleased with my purchase as there were no other beach towels anything like as beautiful on sale. The day before we flew back I had left it drying overnight on a rooftop clothes line and it was stolen. I was gutted! Looking back it showed me how widely Bob Marley's fame had spread around the world. This was my second experience of

‘global music’.

DATA: [‘Redemption Song’](#) The YouTube lyrics version has had 45M views since it was put up 2007.

The beach towel as shown above is still available from [nicholasreggae.com](http://nicholasreggae.com)





CHAPTER 6

‘Thriller’ By Michael Jackson, 1982

I have mentioned that one of the reasons a song becomes global is if it is carried by a movie. When a music video is made with mainstream movie production values and it works artistically, it can be just as potent. The music video [‘Thriller’](#) is considered a break-through moment in the globalisation of Afro-American music. It was certainly the zenith of Jackson’s own career. MTV had started only the year before and the promotional power of the music video was already well known. The project to showcase Michael Jackson’s track ‘Thriller’ as a short film attracted a major film budget and the upcoming director John Landis, who had only just finished his celebrated ‘An American Werewolf in London’.

The video starts with Michael Jackson declaring to his new girlfriend that: *“I’m not like other guys”*. He then transforms into a werewolf in an ‘idealised’ horror movie pastiche. The film then cuts to cute Michael in the cinema audience watching himself on screen. Scared by the horror movie his ‘real’ girlfriend leaves the cinema. Nice Michael joins her and they walk home... past a misty graveyard. Soon after that they are confronted by a host of the undead. After some hesitant facing-off Jackson again changes to bad Micheal and gets down with the undead in what is the classic Thriller dance number. This ‘reality’ itself turns out to be a bad dream and we see good Michael reassuring his girlfriend as she wakes from her disturbed nap. But in a final turn to camera MJ shows us his green eyeballs.

Looking at it today it can perhaps be seen as a chilling insight into the Jekyll and Hyde character of Jackson. At the time he was making this film he was a Jehovah’s Witness and he put this disclaimer onto an old fashioned inter-title before the movie begins:

*“Due to my strong personal convictions, I wish to stress that this film in no way endorses a belief in the occult.”*

I don’t think it does endorse a belief of any sort but it does perhaps indicate the instability of Michaels cutesy persona. At the least MJ was a tense bundle of contradictions. Thriller aligns itself with the musical and horror film, both genres of popular culture. Films calculated to turn their audience into a screaming mess which is a long way from the sang-froid expected of the bourgeois audience.

DATA: [‘Thriller’](#). Nine million copies of the 1983 video sold. The Thriller album sold 51 - 65 million, the most ever album sales. The Youtube version is 13:42 mins long and has had 281 Million views SINCE 2009. But it has also got a thumbs down from 53,000 viewers!

Covers: In 2007 and video of inmates of a maximum security prison in the Philippines doing a

version of the zombie dance from Thriller went viral on YouTube. 55M views of the original upload to date.

Q: Has everyone seen Thriller all the way through? How did you come to see it first? Are you one of the 53,000 who gave it the thumbs down?! If so why?

Photograph from a wall in Porto by szczel 2010





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## CHAPTER 7

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# Can Music Evoke Universal Emotion?

Every human being shares the same basic abilities and range of emotions. But can music that commonly causes strong emotions to the listener in the culture in which it is produced, evoke a similar emotional response in people from other cultures? To test this idea let's listen to: ['I Will Always Love You'](#) by Whitney

Houston from 1992. This song hails its emotional power in three stages from a whisper to Houston's full-on vocal power.

This is a Dolly Parton 'Country & Western' song that she wrote in 1973. Houston's version was released in 1992 and incorporated into the mainstream hit film 'The Bodyguard' with Kevin Costner playing the lead.

*"Where Dolly Parton's original 'I Will Always Love You' was plaintive and tear- stained, Houston's is gospel-infused and dramatic."*

James T. Jones IV November 17, 1992 USA Today.

The cinematic setting with the squeaky clean star Kevin Costner might diminish the song in some peoples eyes. For others the soul of the emotion comes through even with the mainstream production values.

*"I was in jail while watching this movie, this scene came on... And every single person stopped what they were doing, and just watched. There was silence in that tier until she stopped singing. I was amazed, it's crazy what music can do for the world. If you have ever been to jail you would understand it's insanely hard to get it to be quiet."* Paul McCarthy

DATA: 'I Will Always Love You'. 4:43 mins. 14M singles sold. 14th biggest selling single. Best selling film soundtrack. 167 Million online views since 2010. The Italian film clip also has 58 million views etc.

Q: Can there be a expression of emotion in the music of one culture that transcends cultural limitations?

image: analytical sketch of a scene from the video from my notebook





## CHAPTER 8

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### ‘Born This Way’ By Lady Gaga, 2011

At the beginning of the video Lady Gaga announces that:

*“This is the manifesto of mother monster.”*

It was the reports about Gaga’s song and her arty attitude, rather than the

music, that first attracted me. It has been promoted as a song in defense of gay and lesbian people. Gays have been and still are targeted for destruction in many parts of the world and it impressed me that Gaga's message was being delivered on a global platform and not to a limited gay audience. In 2011 Gaga said:

*"I have no reason to do or say anything unless it comes from my soul. I work very hard. I don't party very much. You don't see me falling out of nightclubs and buying Range Rovers. Social justice and music are the two paramount things in my life and I can't put it more plainly."* p.30 ES

17-5-2011 (part of a 5 page special on/by Gaga)

The inspiration for the song's title seems to be Carl Bean's 1977 disco anthem 'I Was Born This Way' which was written in 1971. This was just two years after the Stonewall riots when there was no such thing as an explicit gay anthem. The inspiration for the original is Bunny Jones, a straight, black, Christian woman. She ran a chain of beauty salons in Harlem and was shocked by the bigotry suffered by her gay employees. However looking at the dark sci-fi extravagance of Gaga's video it seems that this song and video is an ambiguous work of art which could have many interpretations. The main thing that comes across to me is a general message of self-acceptance.

DATA: ['Born This Way'](#) 7:19 mins. 9M downloads. 157 Million views. Gaga has three other songs with more than 10 million sales.

Q: Music seems to have the power to be critical and present quite political interventions. Can they be effective in such a commercial frame?

PS: In September 2015 GaGa release a music-video '[Til It Happens to You](#)' dedicated to survivors of sexual assault around the world. Apparently one in five women face assault whilst at college in the US. It got 10M views in the first week.

Image: sketch of a scene from the video from my notebook



## CHAPTER 9

### ‘Gangnam Style’ By Psy, 2012

Around about 2010 Global Music seems to have come of internet age with powerful Asia based music businesses making an impact on global sales. For the first time reversing the dominance of the Western music industry. First there was the rise of C-pop from Taiwan and Hong-Kong, with artists such as the Taiwanese female group S.H.E. with their hit ‘Shero’ in 2010. The top Korean companies then began investing a lot more in their productions and they soon overtook C-pop.

*“By the end of 2012, the song had topped the music charts of more than 30 countries including Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Spain, and the United Kingdom. As the song continued to rapidly gain popularity and ubiquity, its signature dance moves were attempted by many notable political leaders such as the British Prime Minister David Cameron, U.S. President Barack Obama, and United Nations*



*Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who hailed it as a ‘force for world peace’”*. Wikipedia

The thing about [‘Gangnam Style’](#) by Psy, aka Park Jae-sang, which I have to admit a love/hate attitude to, is that you could hardly avoid it if you used the internet in the last few years. It was completely viral. What most of those of us who dismissed this song in 2012 didn’t know was that this catchy but absurd comedy product was the finely honed result of a ten to fifteen year rise of the South Korean music industry. This was simply the breakthrough moment when K-Pop finally dominated the world music market.

When I gave this as a lecture a Korea student commented that the song was important for Koreans because it liberated them from a national stereotype. Koreans could be irreverent, absurd, playful and dance around and have fun.

### **The Formula of success**

Humour

Vulgarity

An original dance

An addictive beat

A wacky video

**DATA:** [‘Gangnam Style’](#). Sales of 13.5 million. It was the first YouTube video to reach 1 Billion views and has now more than doubled that. (now 2.4 Billion views at time of writing)

**Q:** Can you think of other reasons for its success? If this is global culture; do we want it?

image: sketch of a scene from the video from my notebook

## Is It Enough To Look At Songs And Sales?

In the mid Eighties digital CDs gradually took over from analogue records and tapes. By the late Eighties and early Nineties the personal computer had become commonplace and gradually able to edit and produce music. The synth and drum machines, which were expensive electronic instruments in the 1970s and '80s, had become easily and globally available software. With the arrival of cheap home computers people could make music at home and gradually disseminate it via the internet. This started with MIDI in the Eighties but it was the Nineties before computers were powerful enough to generate sounds in real-time. Home computers resulted to a new form of music and music production which now has the blanket title of EDM or Electronic Dance Music. By 1988 Techno or House, as it was then known, had become the most popular form of music in European clubs. This had a social expression in Britain with the huge illegal acid-house 'raves' of 1988-89. This quickly became Europeanised though hedonistic Mediterranean dance clubs like those on Ibiza. It was only almost ten years later in 1998 that Madonna's album 'Ray of Light' brought the genre into the mainstream. Rolling Stone August 2012.

Copyright issues raised by the increasing use of Samplers came to a head with the release of the DJ Danger Mouse's 'Grey Album' in 2004. 'The Grey Album' was a clever mix of a Jay-Z's 2003 accapella 'Black' album and instrumental samples from The Beatles 1968 'White Album'.

It can be argued that mixing makes music inherently more collective. It can be further argued that this reveals what has always been going on in the creative process. Lots of older things or ideas are put together, or mixed, to make something new. The music developed in dance clubs and although some of the DJs have come to be stars in their own right, they relied on a collective process that was happening around them.

This is also true of the Hip Hop and rap scene. Many Rappers and DJs take part in open 'rap battles' and it is those artists that can take the best from these localised sub-cultures that surface on the mainstream media. I'd thinking of artists like Ben Drew, aka Plan B, or Dizzee Rascal. The Wikipedia page ['Rappers from London'](#) lists 70 or 80 names. Then there are similar lists for



American cities, Nigerian cities, Australia and Warsaw. And there are local rap scenes in pretty much every country and every city that have yet to make a Wikipedia page listing. The power of rap is in the vitality of the whole hip-hop scene rather than the top grossing 1%. So the following pages will look at my own selections from these underground scenes.

## Global Hip Hop

There were toasters in Caribbean culture before Rap became a global obsession. This kind of improvised commentary over music may have had roots in the C18th when radicals subverted the pre-dinner toast to the Sovereign that was a staple of respectable culture. It may also have come from widespread traditions of the improvising bard, West African griot or praise singer.

*“Diasporic manifestations of international hip hop are rarely acknowledged in the growing commentary on the genre in the US.”* ‘Global

Noise: Rap and Hip Hop Outside the USA’ Tony Mitchell ed. 2002

A ‘lack of acknowledgement’ may have been true in 2012 but even National Geographic now recognises Hip Hop as the world’s most popular youth culture. By its nature it adapts well to addressing the many cultural variations of urban alienation that exist on the planet. Hip Hop being the subculture that includes spray painting graffiti, tag design, DJ’ing, Street Dancing, fashion and rapping.

[I blogged](#) about some quirkier examples of regional rappers that surfaced on the BBC recently. My three examples are:

The self-dubbed ‘Halal Rappers’. I find the story of the ‘Halal Rappers’ interesting because it shows a flexible and adaptive approach to making culture rather than one that is bound to convention.

The Afro-Russian rappers, Kudzayi King and Ben Maniaci, write raps in praise of Putin. By idolising Putin they also perform a clever ju-jitsu move on the racism in Russian society.

A Vietnamese rapper, Son Nguyen, aka Nah, studying in the United States, makes raps that are a ‘scathing criticism’ of Vietnam’s Communist Party.

*“While today’s commercial American rap music is often critiqued for its shallow lyricism and degrading imagery, international hip-hop maintains a redemptive quality within hip hop culture. It gets praised by many hip hop aficionados for being more ‘organic’ and true to the genre’s roots of resistance.”* Rahiel Tesfamariam, [Washington Post](#), June 11 2013

I don't think this is really true of the US scene. The problem is that a conservative media smokescreen hides the more radical practitioners. There have always been moral and or left-field political rappers in the USA as shown by the [selector Tom Jennings](#). They just don't get airplay.



Q: Does anyone know rappers from their own place of origin?

## E.D.M. - Not Selling Your Soul

An example of this kind of collective interdependency or ‘tributary process’ is the Grime and Dubstep DJ Plastician who started off in the lower class suburb of South London where I now live - Thornton Heath. At the time there was a record shop in Croydon called ‘Big Apple Records’ which was a networking forum for the youths who were experimenting with early computer music programmes like FruityLoops. Now he is going around the world working as a ‘producer’ for global acts like SnoopDog as well as doing his own DJ sets. At the same time he maintains his own independent label called ‘Terrorhythm’. In a recent interview he said:

*“It’s hard to appeal to the masses without selling a part of your soul to the devil. You need to find the right balance and just hope that you can build your own following without having to bow to the demands of the powers that be in the EDM world.”* [Plastician](#) 18/8/2015

[‘LondonLiving’ Plastician music-video featuring Jammz](#)

[Recent interview and ‘Out Of the Darkness Mix’](#)

There are many stories like this as artists duck and dive to survive and make a living.



Photo by [Rude Mortensen](#) cc 2.0

MIA or M.I.A. is a Tamil woman from Hounslow, Middlesex, a poorer suburb to the west of London, who somewhat contradicts this emphasis on an anonymous network as she is now a very overt and colourful rap star. MIA is a second generation immigrant whose father was a leading Tamil activist. Like Plastician she started working from a computer in her bedroom.

[‘The Message’](#) by MIA, 2010.

In 2010, the same year she released ‘The Message’ she also brought out ‘XXXO’ which is a pop song with nearly 10M views. Her video for XXXO has a



‘retro-internet aesthetic’ and although it had higher sales I think ‘The Message’ is a more interesting art piece.

On her move to the US West Coast rap scene: *"I'm glad I went that far into it. I was the best hoochie on the West Coast at the time. I had the best clothes 'cos I was coming from England and really good at shoplifting. I had Versace on before Lil' Kim started rapping about it 'cos the only place I could steal at was Harvey Nicks, where it was sooo easy."* NME ‘In Her

Own Words - MIA's Sharpest Quotes’ 2013.

**DATA: ‘The Message’ was of course also the title of a famous hit by Grandmaster Flash & the Furious Five in 1982 and was the first rap record with a ‘message’.**

**Q: Where do you hear DJs? Are they big names on the radio or people in local clubs?**



CHAPTER 13

## Punk-Rock, News And Pussy Riot

Photo above by Denis Bochkarev 2012

Pussy Riot was formed in Russia in August 2011 with a variable membership of about eleven women and a radical feminist agenda. They got global news coverage after five of them did an ‘unsanctioned concert’ in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow on 21st February 2012. The song they performed was: [‘Punk Prayer – Mother of God, Chase Putin Away’](#). Three

of them were later arrested, charged with ‘hooliganism’ and sentenced to two years imprisonment. Pussy Riot made the news again in February 2014 when they attempted to perform a protest song at the Sochi Winter Olympics and were beaten by uniformed Cossack security. They are quoted as saying:

*“Contemporary culture is characterized by diffusivity, mutual influence and the interaction of different directions.”* Pussy Riot 2012 quoted by Sergey

Chernov, St Petersburg Times #1693

Pussy Riot cite the US based ‘**Riot grrrl**’ movement, which started in 1990, as one of their main punk influences. But the first notable, and perhaps most poetic, feminist punk music was back in 1981.

## British punk band ‘Crass’ 1977 - 1984

I’ve recently had the good fortune to work with ex-Crass singer and visual artist Eve Libertine. Crass was active from 1977 to 1984 and stood out in the punk scene at the time for its articulate political anger mainly on a peace platform, opposing the Falklands War, but also for anarchist direct action. Libertine, and another female singer with the name Joy de Vivre, played a lead role in their third album in 1981 which explored feminist themes. The album was called ‘[Penis Envy](#)’. Crass kept control of their music and didn’t sign to a corporate music label. The remastered collection of their recordings was published in 2010 to meet a world-wide interest.

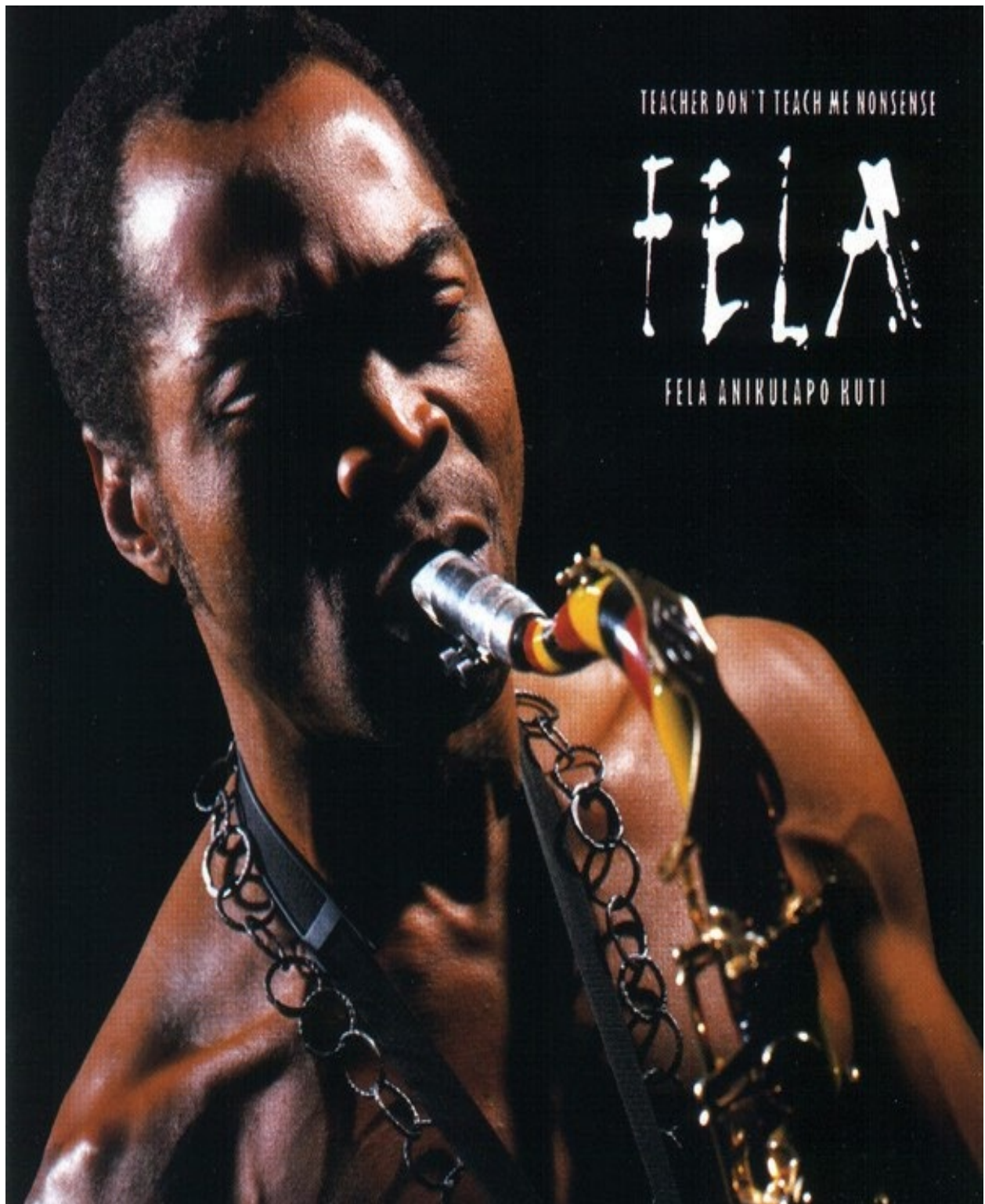
Crass are perhaps the best UK example of an anti-commercial anarcho-punk band that has continued to have a world influence on people who take an interest in punk music and culture.

*“After its emergence in the media in the late 1970's, punk turned into a global ‘mediascape’ with either more or less expressive local translations: punk is not only British or American, it is also Portuguese, Spanish, Mexican or Thai.”* Augusto Santos and Silva Paula Guerra 2013/4

Apart from spreading throughout North America and Europe notable punk sub-cultures emerged in Japan, China, Indonesia, South Africa and [South America](#).

Q: Is Pussy Riot a music group? Or agit prop theatre? Or political demo? Does it matter?





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CHAPTER 14

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‘Buy Africa’ By Fela Kuti, 1971 - 2013 - 2013

*“Fela Anikulapo-Kuti was James Brown, Huey Newton, Rick James, Bob Marley, Duke Ellington and ODB all rolled up in one black African fist.”*  
Mos Def

Fela Kuti was a multi-talented Nigerian musician who died in 1997 aged 58. Perhaps the most globally famous musician from the African continent. He was a controversial figure especially because of his polygamous relations with women which could be seen as exploiting his wealth and power. Even his death had a radical impact because he died as a result of Aids and at a time when many in West Africa were denying its existence. Fela Kuti said:

*“I want to move people to dance, but also to think.”* Fela (Bordowitz 2004)

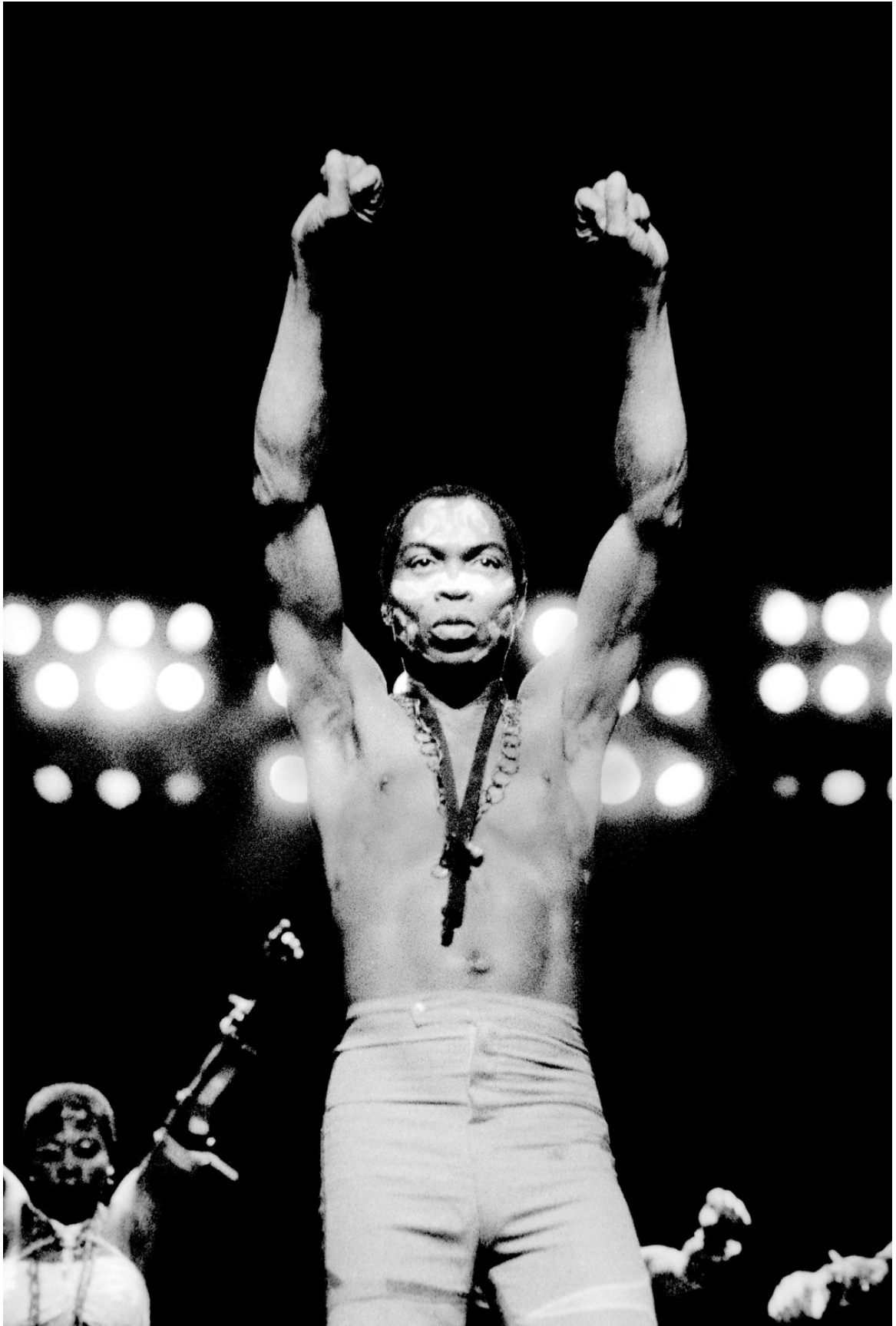
He was also a human rights activist. In 1967 he labelled his music ‘Afrobeat’ and, in 1969 took his band to the USA. He spent 10 months in LA performing six nights a week at the ‘Citadel de Haiti’ on Sunset Boulevard and hooked up with some of The Black Panthers. On his return to Nigeria his lyrical themes turned from love to social issues. These were expressed in pidgin English which allowed Africans all over the continent to understand them. His political views led to heavy repression by the Nigerian military as a result of which his mother died after being thrown from a window in 1977. Nevertheless he continued with his Pan African politics which finally led to him getting a 20 month jail sentence in 1984.

As I have said one of the ways we can measure the widespread influence of a piece of music is by the covers made of it. So I’m not going to play you the original track but a 2013 version of [‘Buy Africa’](#) by a Congolese rapper Baloji. This is partly because Baloji is good, and there is a rich tradition of social and political commentary in Congolese music, but also because the video takes the meaning of the lyrics and unpacks them with a strong visual impact.

DATA: [‘Buy Africa’](#). The original track is 5:51 mins and was recorded in Abbey Road Studios, with Ginger Baker on drums, in 1971.

Fela Kuti doesn’t feature in the top global record sales figures; or not the one I’ve seen. But clearly he is influential way beyond Africa.

Q. What African music have you heard that could claim a global influence?





This is the photograph by Leni Sinclair used in the poster for the film 'Finding Fela', Directed by Alex Gibney, 2014. Permission for use from Rikki Stein of Kalakuta Sunrise Ltd. For more about Fela, go to [fela.net](http://fela.net)

Top image: Recent reissue of 'Teacher Don't Teach Me No Nonsense' (1987) by [Knitting Factory Records](#)

## Routine Art Co Publications

This booklet is the first publication by **Routine Art Co.** (an imprint of Working Press or WP). The original 'Working Press: books by and about working class artists' is asleep but its offspring are stirring. Other ebook titles by Stefan Szczelkun planned for next year, or year after, may include:

Sense-Think-Act - 200 exercises to experience human ability. On iBooks and Amazon from January 2016.

The Gower Chalet Fields - photographs and interview with architect Owen Short

Agit Disco - new ePub edition with hyperlinks and new selectors

Glamour Lied to Me - art and words reprised

Kennington Park: birthplace of British Democracy - ePub re-issue of original pamphlet newly illustrated.

Composition (sic) - a photographic meditation on food waste and the metaphor of de-composition.

'The Heart of the Matter: Diana, democracy and popular culture - newly illustrated pamphlet

Thornton Heath - suburban dreaming a photo essay set to music

A Diary of Political Musics - started in 2008

Jacques Ranciere, Class and Equality of Intelligence

Jurgen Habermas and social class liberation

The Conspiracy of Good Taste - ePub new edition

Exploding Cinema 1991 - 1997 - ePub edition of research material and analysis

Open Artists Collectives in England - 1967 - 2011

Left London - the unaccountably opaque cultural establishment of London

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